



NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 23, 2012

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Fire at State Water Project Pumping-Generating Plant Controlled

SACRAMENTO — Firefighters today were mopping up a fire of undetermined origin that broke out Thursday morning in the State Water Project's Ronald B. Robie Thermalito Pumping-Generating plant near Oroville. There were no injuries in the fire, which will not affect water deliveries.

Fire at the plant, four miles west of Oroville in Butte County, was detected about 7 a.m. Thanksgiving day, and was responded to by CAL FIRE and local agency firefighters, who brought the flames under control late this morning. Firefighters on Thursday were forced out of the burning building by life-threatening dangers from collapsing equipment, zero visibility and other conditions. There were no personnel in the plant when the fire started.

Firefighters today reported fire and smoke damage to the third and fourth floors of the five-story building, and smoke damage to the top floor. There was no damage to the bottom two floors of the structure. All but the top floor of the building are underground.

Monetary and equipment damage from the fire are not yet known. After structural engineers declare the building clear of hazards, DWR crews will determine the extent of damage. The plant will resume operation as soon as possible.

The plant is operated in tandem with Hyatt Powerplant beneath Oroville Dam and the nearby Thermalito Diversion Dam powerplant to produce electrical power to pump State Water Project (SWP) water. The SWP delivers water to more than 25 million Californians and nearly a million acres of irrigated farmland. The damaged plant normally produces about five percent of the SWP's electrical output. If necessary, the Department of Water Resources, which owns and operates the SWP, will purchase additional power to compensate for generating loss.

Water released from Lake Oroville behind Oroville Dam can be diverted around the damaged pumping-generating plant, minimizing any impact to water deliveries. In normal operations, water released from Lake Oroville in excess of what is needed to generate power at the pumping-generating plant is pumped back into storage in the lake to be used again for hydropower generation.

In addition to CAL FIRE, the fire at the plant was responded to by crews from the cities of Oroville and Chico, and Butte County.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.